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INCREASE IN DUCK STAMP PRICE, ESTABLISHMENT OF FEDERAL PERMIT FOR OTHER
MIGRATORY BIRDS, AND EXTENSION OF WETLANDS LOAN RECOMMENDED BY INTERIOR

In response to a Congressional request for its views on H.R. 480 extending the wetlands loan program, and H.R. 482 to increase the duck stamp price and require a "stamp" for other migratory bird hunting, the Department urged enactment of a substitute bill that "combines what we consider to be the best features of both bills."

The Wetlands Loan Act of 1961 authorized an advance appropriation of \$105 million to the Migratory Bird Conservation fund. This fund from duck stamp sales is used by Interior's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife to purchase or lease areas for migratory waterfowl. Repayment on the seven-year advance is to begin in 1969.

Prior to the Wetlands Loan Act, Interior estimated that fee title or easements on 2½ million acres could be acquired during the seven-year period, using about \$35 million in duck stamp receipts and the \$105 million advance. Steeply rising land costs and local opposition to Federal land acquisition have delayed the program. As of June 30, 1966, 741,000 acres had been acquired in fee or easement with a total appropriation of \$32.5 million from the loan and about \$21.5 million from duck stamp receipts. The recommended eight-year extension of the loan authorization is expected to allow reaching the 2½ million acre goal before repayment from duck stamp revenues begins.

Under Interior's proposed bill, the \$3 Federal duck stamp required of waterfowl hunters 16 years of age and older would increase to \$5, giving the Department about \$56 million rather than \$40 million during the next eight years. This, plus the balance from the \$105 million loan, would enable Interior to buy the needed wetlands more quickly and at lower prices because of increasing costs. Increased duck stamp revenues would repay the \$105 million advance within a shorter time, also.

A special \$1 hunting permit for doves, woodcock, rails, and other migratory game birds aside from waterfowl would provide funds for research, development, and management programs for these birds, plus names and addresses of hunters for surveys to determine hunter interest and other management data.

Under Interior's proposed legislation, up to 50 percent of net receipts from the \$1 stamp would be available to State wildlife agencies on a contract basis for research, survey, and data collection. A limited amount of land acquisition particularly nesting habitat for white-winged doves, is presently anticipated for these "non-waterfowl" migratory birds.

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